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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

The Tapes, the Transcripts and the President

As a physicist involved in the problem of the technical examination of the White House tapes, I write to suggest a different type of compromise between the House Judiciary Committee and the White House.

There are several points to consider. First the human ear is totally inadequate for the detection of tampering. To have Congressmen Rodino and Hutchinson listen to the tapes has no technical value. Even amateurs can erase and record again, changing words or sentences without leaving tell-tale sounds detectable by ear. On the other hand, instrumental analysis is conclusive. Secondly, instrumental analysis can be done silently. The technicians need not hear what is on the tape. Thus, national security matters or matters of personal embarrassment to Nixon can be safeguarded. The third important point is that unintelligible words can often be made to be understandable through computer aided signal analysis and noise removal. Even if two people are speaking concurrently, voice prints of the speakers can be used to distinguish and identify the spoken words.

The suggested compromise is obvious. A small group of Judiciary Committee and White House Staff listen to all tapes to determine relevant portions. Then the technical experts authenticate the evidence and clarify the unintelligible words. The sensitive matters can be protected by using silent analysis.

If Nixon wishes to have all evidence looked at "fully and objectively", technical analysis must be included. If the public wishes to know all the truth, and wishes to believe their President, it must demand that all evidence be delivered intact, in original form for technical verification. No cut up pieces can be acceptable.

The nation has several competent teams to do the job. The group established for Judge Sirica's court is well experienced. Let them continue or let them vouch for the credentials of new workers. The latter is an important point, for this work requires an unusual amount of new technical sophistication.

In calling for all the evidence, we must cast Nixon's latest verification proposals into historical perspective. Last October Judge Sirica rejected similar proposals in his historic decision on White House evidence. The Prosecutor had argued that whole rolls of tapes must be delivered intact. When White House counsel objected that irrelevant material would be included, Sirica ruled that the court alone would decide on relevancy.

Had the White House delivered pieces of tapes or transcripts thereof, and copies of documents rather than originals, the public surely would not have learned of: deliberate tape erasures evidenced by unequivocal marks on the tapes; deliberate back-dating of property deeds evidenced by specific defects in typewriter keys; nor deliberate scissoring of documents as evidenced by comparison to earlier copies. It would appear that the White House has not been fair to the public in its handling of evidence.

Fairness to Nixon indeed requires that irrelevant material be screened out, but fairness to the public requires that staff of the Judiciary Committee control the screening. Nixon cannot be the sole arbiter of truth in the matter. We must have the complete, original evidence, not the Nixon version of it.

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'Betrayal of Mandate'

Nixon's certain crimes, as I see them after reading page upon page of the transcripts, are (1) abdication of the office of the presidency to spend untold hours of OUR time (and money) on his personal squalid drama, and (2) failure to appoint a surrogate to run domestic affairs during this far-from-finished episode. He is certainly guilty of betrayal of his mandate, which I hope is an impeachable crime.

JOSEPHINE WINTERNITZ.
Arlington.

Tax-Deductible Tapes?

According to the White House, presidential conversations were not taped to enrich the President but history. This denial pooh-poohed the media's surmise that since the law does not expressly forbid the donation of presidential tapes for tax deduction purposes, the President may have activated the tapes with just such a tax windfall in mind.

To obviate the likelihood of future tax rip-offs by this President, Congress should plug up this potentially lucrative and patently unfair loophole in the law.

MILDRED FEUERSTEIN.
Silver Spring.

'Let's Be Constitutional'

The Post's May 10 editorial, which suggests at least tacit approval of an "Agnew solution" to the dilemma of the President and the country, is a disturbing retreat from The Post's previous clear position on impeachment-or-resignation.

Call it "indemnification" if you will, but the protection from prosecution which you suggest might be afforded private citizen Nixon, in return for some formal declaration of fault from him, seems little more than presidential plea-bargaining, a search for a deal.

It is still debatable whether Agnew should have been permitted a similar arrangement, but at least in that matter the case for swift removal was clearer: A man so tainted by the massive evidence of corruption which the prosecution had assembled could not be allowed to remain that proverbial "heartbeat" away from an office already under cloud enough.

From a practical standpoint, resignation-with-dishonor (but with protection!) is sticky enough. The White House transcripts indicate evidence of corruption in this case, too, but there

are still loose ends. Resignation now might prevent a final accounting on whether Nixon abused his office or was hounded from it because of the appearance that he did. Political division would remain.

Neither the President's place in history nor the country would be well-served by such an approach. The Constitution is silent on plea-bargaining. It does speak to impeachment. Let's be constitutional.

WAYNE WOODLIEF.
Alexandria.

Defends Mr. Nixon

Never in American history has a President been treated worse by the public. He has been made fair game to tear apart openly by the news media, TV news and TV shows. It is more than any human should endure. Our President is being treated far worse than any criminal, in or out of jail.

It is all too clear, that from the very beginning of his presidency, this all out attack is strictly political.

They are after his scalp—guilty or not.

TRUDI WORRELL.
Fairfax.

Complete Disclosure?

I was reading the Government Printing Office edition of the transcripts of Nixon's tapes and I made the following observation:

On Page 16 of the summary preceeding the transcript Nixon is quoted as supporting complete disclosure:

P. So what you really come to is what we do . . . Complete disclosure isn't that the best way to do it?

However the actual conversation (March 21, 1973, appendix 6, page 34-5, GPO page 203-4) reads:

P. So what you really come down to is what we do. Let's suppose that you and Halde-man and Ehrlichman and Mitchell say we can't hold this? What then are you going to say? What are you going to put out after it. Complete disclosure isn't that the best way to do it?

It seems that Nixon supports complete disclosure only as a last resort if "we can't hold this." Is this the kind of distortion necessary in order to interpret 'ambiguous' tapes in Nixon's favor?

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